REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-10 and 12-19 are pending in the application. Claim 11 is canceled without prejudice, and Claims 1, 6, 10, 14, 16 and 18 are amended by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Watanabe et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,072,190, herein "Watanabe").

Claims 1-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Watanabe. That rejection is respectfully traversed.

Amended independent Claim 1 is directed to a contactor used for testing electric characteristics of an object to be tested. The contactor has a contactor board, a plurality of conductive members formed through the contactor board, a plurality of beam members, and a contact terminal member. The plurality of beam members each have a tip end and a base end at its both ends in which one end of the base end is fixed to the conductive member of the contactor board. At least a conductive layer is provided between the tip end and the base end. Each beam member has a step, which is separated from the contactor board between the tip end and the base end. The contact terminal member is provided at the tip end of each beam member in which the contact terminal member is formed integrally with the conductive layer of the beam member.

Amended independent Claim 16 is directed to a contactor used to test electric characteristics of an object to be tested that incudes a contactor board, at least one conductive member, at least one beam member, and a contact terminal member. The at least one conductive member is formed through the contactor board. The at least one beam member has one of a step shape and a slope shape and has a tip end and a base end. One end of the base end is fixed to the at least one conductive member of the contactor board. In the beam

member one of the step shape and the slope shape is separated from the contactor board between the tip end and the base end. The contact terminal member is provided at the tip end of the at least one beam member.

In a non-limiting example, Figures 1 and 3 illustrate a beam member 13 having a step portion 13C that is separated from the contactor board 11. Contact terminal member 14 provided at the tip end of the beam member 13 has a high elasticity, thereby contacting the electrode pad P stably with a low contact resistance and without damage to the beam member 13. Similarly, in a non-limiting example, Figures 11 and 12 illustrate a beam member 13 having an slope shape.

Watanabe does not teach or suggest a beam member having a step or slope portion that is separated from the contactor board. Instead, Watanabe discloses a beam 4 and having a straight shape (figure 1; column 4, lines 35-39).

Thereby, each of independent Claims 1 and 16, and the claims dependent therefrom, patentably define over Watanabe. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested this rejection be withdrawn.

Additionally, the dependent claims of the claimed invention further define over the applied art for additional reasons now discussed. Applicant respectfully submits that the conductive layer disclosed in Watanabe does not correspond to the conductive layer recited in Claim 3 of the present application. Rather, the conductive layer disclosed in Watanabe is a piezoelectric element 6 formed on the beam 4 (figure 6; column 5, lines 40-67; and column 6, lines 1-10).

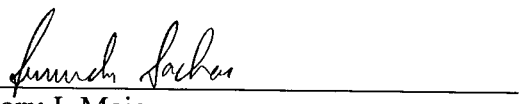
Claims 4 and 5 recite that the contact terminal member is a high-hardness conductive metal, an alloy or a metal compound thereof. Conversely, the material disclosed in Watanabe is a soft metal rather than a high-hardness conductive metal (figure 6, column 5, lines 40-67, and column 6, lines 1-10). Additionally, Watanabe discloses a titanium oxide that constitutes

part of PLZT, and is not a material for forming the contact terminal member (column 6, lines 4-10). Claims 6-9 recite a recess having such a cross section that deepens according to a pattern corresponding to a step shape of the beam member. Further, Claim 7 recites that the silicon layer is doped with boron. Watanabe does not teach or suggest these features. Amended Claim 10 recites an electric connection member interposed between the contactor and the card board and that the electric connection member takes on a cushioning structure. Watanabe fails to teach or suggest an electric connection member as recited in Claim 10. Finally, Claim 15 recites that an elastic film is interposed between the contactor board and the card board. Conversely, reference numerals 11 and 30 of Watanabe designate wires on the silicon substrate rather than elastic films (figure 2 and column 4, lines 35-56). Accordingly, the above-noted dependent claims even further distinguish over the applied art.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance an and early and favorable action to effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Gregory J. Maier
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 25,599
Surinder Sachar
Registration No. 34,423

22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
GJM/SS/KLL/cja

I:\ATTY\KLL\PROSECUTION\215996US\215996US-AM.DOC